



Phase II and Phase III Archeological Database and Inventory

Site Number: 18FR323

Site Name: Catoctin/Renner Burial Ground

Prehistoric ☒

Other name(s) Orr's "Check 6"

Historic ☒

Brief Description:

late 18th-early 19th century African-American cemetery; Prehistoric lithic scatter

Unknown ☐

Site Location and Environmental Data:

Latitude 39.5802 Longitude -77.4364

Elevation m Site slope 0-5%

Site setting

-Site Setting restricted

-Lat/Long accurate to within 1 sq. mile, user may need to make slight adjustments in mapping to account for sites near state/county lines or streams

Maryland Archeological Research Unit No. 17

SCS soil & sediment code EcB2

Physiographic province Blue Ridge

Terrestrial site ☒

Underwater site ☐

Ethnobotany profile available ☒ Maritime site ☐

Nearest Surface Water

Name (if any) Little Hunting Creek

Saltwater

Ocean ☐

Estuary/tidal river ☐

Tidewater/marsh ☐

Minimum distance to water is 300 m

Freshwater

Stream/river ☒

Swamp ☐

Lake or pond ☐

Spring ☐

Temporal & Ethnic Contextual Data:

Paleoindian site ☐

Woodland site ☐

Archaic site ☐

MD Adena ☐

Early archaic ☐

Early woodland ☐

Middle archaic ☐

Mid. woodland ☐

Late archaic ☐

Late woodland ☐

Unknown prehistoric context ☒

Contact period site ☐ ca. 1820 - 1860 ☒

ca. 1630 - 1675 ☐ ca. 1860 - 1900 ☐

ca. 1675 - 1720 ☐ ca. 1900 - 1930 ☐

ca. 1720 - 1780 ☐ Post 1930 ☐

ca. 1780 - 1820 ☒

Unknown historic context ☐

Unknown context ☐

Ethnic Associations (historic only)

Native American ☐

Asian American ☐

African American ☒

Unknown ☐

Anglo-American ☐

Other ☐

Hispanic ☐

Y=Confirmed, P=Possible

Site Function Contextual Data:

Prehistoric

Multi-component ☐

Misc. ceremonial ☐

Village ☐

Rock art ☐

Hamlet ☐

Shell midden ☐

Base camp ☐

STU/lithic scatter ☒

Rockshelter/cave ☐

Quarry/extraction ☐

Earthen mound ☐

Fish weir ☐

Cairn ☐

Production area ☐

Burial area ☐

Unknown ☐

Other context ☐

Historic

Urban/Rural? Rural ☒

Domestic

Homestead ☐

Farmstead ☐

Mansion ☐

Plantation ☐

Row/townhome ☐

Cellar ☐

Privy ☐

Industrial

Mining-related ☐

Quarry-related ☐

Mill ☐

Black/metalsmith ☐

Furnace/forge ☐

Other ☐

Transportation

Canal-related ☐

Road/railroad ☐

Wharf/landing ☐

Maritime-related ☐

Bridge ☐

Ford ☐

Educational

Commercial ☐

Trading post ☐

Store ☐

Tavern/inn ☐

Military

Battlefield ☐

Fortification ☐

Encampment ☐

Townsite

Church/mtg house ☐

Ch support bldg ☐

Religious

Burial area ☒

Cemetery ☒

Sepulchre ☒

Isolated burial ☐

Bldg or foundation ☐

Possible Structure ☐

Post-in-ground ☐

Frame-built ☐

Masonry ☐

Other structure ☐

Slave related

Non-domestic agri ☐

Recreational ☐

Midden/dump ☐

Artifact scatter ☐

Spring or well ☐

Unknown ☐

Other context ☐

Interpretive Sampling Data:

Prehistoric context samples

Soil samples taken N

Flotation samples taken N

Other samples taken

Historic context samples

Soil samples taken Y

Flotation samples taken Y

Other samples taken floral, textile



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Diagnostic Artifact Data:

Projectile Point Types	
Clovis	<input type="text"/>
Hardaway-Dalton	<input type="text"/>
Palmer	<input type="text"/>
Kirk (notch)	<input type="text"/>
Kirk (stem)	<input type="text"/>
Le Croy	<input type="text"/>
Morrow Mntn	<input type="text"/>
Guilford	<input type="text"/>
Brewerton	<input type="text"/>
Otter Creek	<input type="text"/>
Koens-Crispin	<input type="text"/>
Perkiomen	<input type="text"/>
Susquehanna	<input type="text"/>
Vernon	<input type="text"/>
Piscataway	<input type="text"/>
Calvert	<input type="text"/>
Selby Bay	<input type="text"/>
Jacks Rf (notch)	<input type="text"/>
Jacks Rf (pent)	<input type="text"/>
Madison/Potomac	<input type="text"/>
Levanna	<input type="text"/>

Prehistoric Sherd Types

Marcey Creek	<input type="text"/>	Popes Creek	<input type="text"/>	Shepard	<input type="text"/>	Keyser	<input type="text"/>
Dames Qtr	<input type="text"/>	Coulbourn	<input type="text"/>	Townsend	<input type="text"/>	Yeocomico	<input type="text"/>
Selden Island	<input type="text"/>	Watson	<input type="text"/>	Minguannan	<input type="text"/>	Monongahela	<input type="text"/>
Accokeek	<input type="text"/>	Mockley	<input type="text"/>	Sullivan Cove	<input type="text"/>	Susquehannock	<input type="text"/>
Wolfe Neck	<input type="text"/>	Clemson Island	<input type="text"/>	Shenks Ferry	<input type="text"/>		
Vinette	<input type="text"/>	Page	<input type="text"/>	Moyaone	<input type="text"/>		
				Potomac Cr	<input type="text"/>		

Historic Sherd Types

Earthenware		Ironstone		Staffordshire		Stoneware	
Astbury	<input type="text"/>	Jackfield	<input type="text"/>	Tin Glazed	<input type="text"/>	English Brown	<input type="text"/>
Borderware	<input type="text"/>	Mn Mottled	<input type="text"/>	Whiteware	<input type="text"/>	Eng Dry-bodie	<input type="text"/>
Buckley	<input type="text"/>	North Devon	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	Nottingham	<input type="text"/>
Creamware	<input type="text"/>	Pearlware	<input type="text"/>	Porcelain	<input type="text"/>	Rhenish	<input type="text"/>
						Wt Salt-glazed	<input type="text"/>

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

Other Artifact & Feature Types:

Prehistoric Artifacts	
Flaked stone	<input type="text"/>
Ground stone	<input type="text"/>
Stone bowls	<input type="text"/>
Fire-cracked rock	<input type="text"/>
Other lithics (all)	<input type="text"/>
Ceramics (all)	<input type="text"/>
Rimsherds	<input type="text"/>
Other fired clay	<input type="text"/>
Human remain(s)	<input type="text"/>
Modified faunal	<input type="text"/>
Unmod faunal	<input type="text"/>
Oyster shell	<input type="text"/>
Floral material	<input type="text"/>
Uncommon Obj.	<input type="text"/>
Other	<input type="text"/>

Prehistoric Features

Mound(s)	<input type="text"/>	Storage/trash pit	<input type="text"/>
Midden	<input type="text"/>	Burial(s)	<input type="text"/>
Shell midden	<input type="text"/>	Ossuary	<input type="text"/>
Postholes/molds	<input type="text"/>	Unknown	<input type="text"/>
House pattern(s)	<input type="text"/>	Other	<input type="text"/>
Palisade(s)	<input type="text"/>		
Hearth(s)	<input type="text"/>		
Lithic reduc area	<input type="text"/>		

Lithic Material

Jasper	<input type="text"/>	Fer quartzite	<input type="text"/>	Sil sandstone	<input type="text"/>
Chert	<input type="text"/>	Chalcedony	<input type="text"/>	European flint	<input type="text"/>
Rhyolite	<input type="text"/>	Ironstone	<input type="text"/>	Basalt	<input type="text"/>
Quartz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Argilite	<input type="text"/>	Unknown	<input type="text"/>
Quartzite	<input type="text"/>	Steatite	<input type="text"/>	Other	<input type="text"/>
		Sandstone	<input type="text"/>		

☒ Dated features present at site

Burials dated from 1790-1840 by coffin nails.

Historic Artifacts	
Pottery (all)	<input type="text"/>
Glass (all)	<input type="text"/>
Architectural	<input type="text"/>
Furniture	<input type="text"/>
Arms	<input type="text"/>
Clothing	<input type="text"/>
Personal items	<input type="text"/>
Tobacco related	<input type="text"/>
Activity item(s)	<input type="text"/>
Human remain(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Faunal material	<input type="text"/>
Misc. kitchen	<input type="text"/>
Floral material	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Misc.	<input type="text"/>
Other	<input type="text"/>

Historic Features

Const feature	<input type="text"/>	Privy/outhouse	<input type="text"/>	Depression/mound	<input type="text"/>	Unknown	<input type="text"/>
Foundation	<input type="text"/>	Well/cistern	<input type="text"/>	Burial(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="text"/>
Cellar hole/cellar	<input type="text"/>	Trash pit/dump	<input type="text"/>	Railroad bed	<input type="text"/>		
Hearth/chimney	<input type="text"/>	Sheet midden	<input type="text"/>	Earthworks	<input type="text"/>		
Postholes/molds	<input type="text"/>	Planting feature	<input type="text"/>	Mill raceway	<input type="text"/>		
Paling ditch/fence	<input type="text"/>	Road/walkway	<input type="text"/>	Wheel pit	<input type="text"/>		

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

Radiocarbon Data:

Sample 1:	<input type="text"/>	+/-	<input type="text"/>	years BP	Reliability	Sample 2:	<input type="text"/>	+/-	<input type="text"/>	years BP	Reliability	Sample 3:	<input type="text"/>	+/-	<input type="text"/>	years BP	Reliability
Sample 4:	<input type="text"/>	+/-	<input type="text"/>	years BP	Reliability	Sample 5:	<input type="text"/>	+/-	<input type="text"/>	years BP	Reliability	Sample 6:	<input type="text"/>	+/-	<input type="text"/>	years BP	Reliability
Sample 7:	<input type="text"/>	+/-	<input type="text"/>	years BP	Reliability	Sample 8:	<input type="text"/>	+/-	<input type="text"/>	years BP	Reliability	Sample 9:	<input type="text"/>	+/-	<input type="text"/>	years BP	Reliability

☐ Additional radiocarbon results available



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late 18th-early 19th century African-American cemetery; Prehistoric lithic scatter

Unknown ☐

External Samples/Data:

Collection curated at MAC, Smithsonian

☒ Additional raw data may be available online

Summary Description:

The Catoctin/Renner Burial Ground (18FR323) is a late 18th and early 19th century slave cemetery. It is located along US Route 15, just to the south of the historic iron furnace at Catoctin in Frederick County, Maryland. Both oral history and archeological work seem to be compatible with the idea that those interred at the burial ground were enslaved individuals. The owners of the Catoctin Iron Works in the late 18th and early 19th century, who owned the land on which the burial site is located, did own slaves and probably used their labor in the operation of the furnace complex.

The site was first examined by archeologists in 1977 during a Phase I survey through the Catoctin Furnace Historic District and environs prior to the dualization of US Route 15. During the investigations, the right-of-way for the highway was thoroughly surveyed and mapped, and extensive amounts of local historical research and interviews with local informants were conducted. One local informant, William Renner (for whom the site has been named), could recount local lore regarding a cemetery (located on property he had previously owned) that supposedly contained the graves of "blacks and Indians", as well as some plague victims. A brief site visit by the archeological team revealed fieldstone gravemarkers laid out in rows. These markers were mostly of unretouched local stone, about 61 cm long by 23 cm in diameter, erected to stand on their long axes. Only about half of each stone showed above the surface. Some stone had a small ledge or flat space chipped off the upper end, but no incised, painted, or other inscriptions were visible. As the site indeed appeared to contain a cemetery and Maryland state law mandated the complete removal of all human remains affected by proposed development, the investigators proceeded to Phase II testing to determine the extent of the site and to confirm the presence of burials.

Archival and oral history research played an important role in the initial stages of analysis, prior to excavation. This research revealed that in the year 1774, James, Thomas, Baker, and Roger Johnson constructed the first iron furnace at Catoctin. In 1776, they began producing pig iron under the name of James Johnson and Company. Hematite ore from the Catoctin Mountains provided the raw material for production of the iron while the Catoctin forests provided charcoal for fuel. In addition, water from the local springs and streams provided the energy to power enormous bellows blowing air into the furnace, as well as power for forge hammers, mills, and other machines. A complex system of ponds, races, ditches, dams, and aqueducts ensured that the water wheels were supplied with sufficient "drop" to maintain the power levels needed. One of the most important early products of the furnace is rumored to have been supplies (including munitions) for George Washington's Army. While pig iron continued to be produced at the furnace, other important products were machine parts, foundry rolling mills, iron car/cart wheels, cast-iron stoves, and other materials. During the Civil War, iron from the furnace was used to armor the famous iron-clad ship, the Monitor. Over the course of history a number of additional furnace stacks, support structures, quarries, casting areas, and other structures were constructed in the area. Some structures were demolished and improved facilities were built.

The owners and operators of the Catoctin Iron Works in the period 1790-1840 all owned slaves. The demographic distribution of the slaves listed in the 1811 will of one of the owners of the Catoctin Works, Baker Johnson, suggests that his slaves were a community of family groups. Rather than leaving skilled iron workers to his family to ensure the survival of the furnace, he appears to have been more concerned with preserving the slaves' own nuclear family units when determining their disposition among his heirs. This calls into question, whether Baker's slaves were engaged at the iron works. However, census records indicate that many of the Catoctin area slaves were employed at a variety of occupations, and elsewhere than in their owners' places of residence. At other contemporary iron works in the region, the use of slave labor was a fairly common practice, including at the Antietam Furnace (18WA288). During the 1820s and 1830s, when the use of slaves is well documented at the Antietam furnace, it and the Catoctin Iron Works were owned by the same gentleman; Mr. John Brien. Regardless, of whether they were employed at the furnace or not (and it seems likely that at least some must have been), there were numerous slaves living in the area.

There was probably also a number of free blacks in the vicinity. The free black population of Frederick grew significantly from 1790 until 1860, and it would seem that the prospect of employment in the furnace area might be a powerful attractant. Whether, free or slave, the black community at Catoctin lived in a segregated world and would not have worshipped alongside whites. Interestingly, there are no historic maps or other documentary indicators of a separate church for the black community. According to one unsubstantiated account, special services were held at the Episcopal Harriet Chapel (next to the furnace itself) for the area's African-American residents (both slave and free). Thus, there is no other location specifically associated with the black inhabitants of the furnace area which serves as a "better" candidate for the location of a slave cemetery.

Interviews with the local inhabitants did not clear things up either. Most had no knowledge of the cemetery's existence, and those that did knew little other than the site was reputedly associated with plague and pestilence (typhoid fever was specifically mentioned), or had been used by "Indians and Negroes". Children had traditionally avoided the place due to these associations, and perhaps that is where some of these ideas originated over the years. According to Renner, even the "old timers" he had once known could only remember one burial event in the cemetery. They told the story of a mulatto individual who had died of smallpox on the mountain. After a regrettable delay, his remains were brought down in an iron coffin and buried in the graveyard. The coffin was supposedly of the common Late 19th/early 20th century type produced at the furnace. Renner also relayed that one morning, sometime in the mid 1940s, he had tracked a "polecat" to its den in the cemetery to retrieve a chicken that had been stolen in the night. During his digging into the den, he uncovered the legs of an interred individual, which he rapidly covered up after retrieving his chicken. Later he drove off some boys who dug a shallow trench under a headstone in search of skeletons. No other information could be gained from archival research or oral history. Ultimately, archeology would have to resolve the issue of the community with which the graves should be associated.

Phase II work began in 1977 with the excavation of five test units of varying size. This work yielded two depressions of uncertain origin as well as the graves of at least two human infants. It was also observed that the cemetery lay directly north of a limestone quarry pit (18FR325) and at least part of the site seemed to contain an over-burden or "mantle" of limestone rock fragments, presumably from the quarry. Aside from the human remains, the only objects mentioned in the Phase II report are "several small square nails" and charred material that included leather (found in one of the unidentified depressions). As it was believed that a significant number of burials (as many as 100) might be preserved beneath the limestone rubble in the western portion of the site, the project proceeded immediately to full-scale data recovery (Phase III) excavations.

The initial stage of Phase III work consisted of clearing an area of the undergrowth to allow all visible gravestone markers to be located, and to permit the perimeters of the cemetery to be identified. A datum point and zero-line were established along the eastern edge of the (then) existing northbound lane of Route 15 and a 3.048 meter (10 ft) grid system was laid down. The grid was only laid down within the right-of-way for the proposed dualization of US Route 15, even though the cemetery extended farther to the east. As the graves outside of the right-of-way would not be impacted by construction, they were left undisturbed. After establishment of the grid, surface probing was undertaken to locate potential gravemarking stones. A total of 126 such stones (not included



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in the artifact tables above) were located and mapped, of which 106 were local quartzite, 7 were limestone, and the remainder were milky quartz or other stone.

During the 1979 field season, trenches were excavated manually and mechanically to locate burials and to define the perimeters of the site. Twenty-six graves were found between a depth of 73 cm and 1.5 meters below the surface. All graves were excavated in 10.16 cm (4 in) arbitrary levels, and burial fill was screened through hardware cloth. In order to locate every burial remaining in the right-of-way, a gradall removed the topsoil at the beginning of the 1980 field season. Nine additional graves were excavated, following the procedures and standards established during the 1979 investigation.

The cemetery was laid out in north-south rows spaced 3.048 meters (10 ft) apart, with graves oriented east to west approximately 1.2192 meters (4 ft) apart. All 35 graves were single interment coffin burials, with one exception; a child interred directly above an adult female. Individuals were buried supine, with heads to the west, and in an extended position with hands folded over the abdomen. Rectangular and pinch-toe type coffins were made of white oak and chestnut. Age at death in this cemetery population ranged from neonate to elderly, and the condition of the skeletal remains varied from poor to excellent. The diagnostic materials in the graves (primarily coffin nails) are consistent with a date range of circa 1790-1840. There was no discernable pattern of date distributions spatially across the area excavated.

Burial-related artifacts encountered at the site include 54 clothing items, 1,014 furniture objects, and 1 miscellaneous object (a peach pit). The clothing items are typical of very simple funerary clothing; 27 cuprous metal shroud pins, at least 5 fibers from burial shrouds (identified as were identified as woven, wool textiles), 11 cuprous buttons, 2 white metal buttons, 2 shell buttons, and 7 other buttons. The funerary furniture (coffins), consisted almost exclusively of pinch-toe coffins, the remains of which had mostly decayed. However, metal parts were preserved and recovered. These include 471 machine-cut coffin nails, 500 hand-wrought coffin nails, 14 unidentifiable (hand-headed) coffin nails, 6 machine-made screws, 10 unidentifiable screws, 2 pieces of coffin wood with nails, 7 other pieces of coffin wood, and 4 metal plates used as coffin hardware. The peach pit may be part of a funerary offering. While the burials appeared to reflect European Christian mortuary practices, there was also evidence of possible African-American folk beliefs. In addition to the peach pit, the presence of fruit and seed funeral wreaths, as opposed to flowers, was noted in at least three other interments. The disposition of seeds suggested intentional placement at the time of interment in at least three of these four cases. One infant contained a cluster of raspberry or blackberry seeds, which formed a corona around its cranium, while two adult graves had sassafras on top of the coffin surface. Full details regarding the ethnobotanical assemblage are available in the linked ethnobotany profile.

In addition to the burial-related artifacts, several additional objects were encountered including 4 activity items (a metal animal trap, a piece of barbed wire, and 2 horsehoes with nails), 7 architectural artifacts (3 pieces of brick, 1 nail, 2 cut wood fragments, and a spike), 10 kitchen-related artifacts (1 pearlware sherd, 3 whiteware sherds, 1 redware sherd, 4 unidentified ceramic sherds, and a bottle fragment), 31 miscellaneous objects, and 14 prehistoric artifacts. The miscellaneous historic objects were a piece of charcoal, 24 animal bones, 2 rodent skeletons, 3 pieces of slag and a metal object. The prehistoric artifacts were 2 rhyolite bifaces, a quartz scraper, 1 utilized/retouched quartz flake, 5 quartz flakes, 3 rhyolite flakes, 1 other flake, and an unidentified sherd. As an Archaic lithic scatter is located just to the south, the presence of prehistoric material is not surprising.

Analysis of the human remains is telling. In every case where a skull was adequately preserved to permit association with a "racial group", individuals were determined to have been African/Black/African-American; most with few or no cranial features associated with whites. With little admixture with white genes, these individuals were probably recent arrivals from Africa. Age and sex distributions within the cemetery appear to be typical for 18th-early 19th century cemeteries and spatial patterning of burials was entirely random with respect to age and sex. However, some individuals seem to have been buried in groups, possibly providing evidence of family interments. Signs of disease and trauma include one adult male with a lower leg fracture with fusion and an apparent trephination through the left parietal, another adult male with a severe and probably crippling fusion of lower lumbar to sacrum, many individuals with arthritic degeneration of neck vertebrae, signs of rickets, periostitis indicative of systemic infections, and poor teeth. From the lack of material goods in the burials, it can be inferred that the people were of low socio-economic status.

So, the physical anthropology indicates that these people were black and possibly first or second generation Africans. It also seems to suggest a life of manual labor. And they were apparently poor. The historic sources indicate that they were probably slaves who had some connection to the iron furnace complex. However, the sorts of distinctive burial practices generally associated with the African heritage in black American cemeteries were absent here. There were no graveyard decorations, no heaps of broken crockery, bottles, white seashells, etc. as have been observed in other slave cemeteries of the period. Only the possible appearance at the cemetery of fruit and seed funeral wreaths, as opposed to flowers, was unusual in otherwise very "Christian" burials. Religion was often imposed by a Christian master upon his slaves and he had full authority as to how they would be buried. Thus, these may not have been Christianized Africans, but merely Africans made slaves and forced to live in a Christianized society where every aspect of their lives (including death) was governed by someone else's choices. The botanical offerings may have been the only means of funeral-associated personal expression permitted them by their masters. All of the data seem to be quite consistent with the local lore that this was a slave cemetery. No evidence of Native American burials or mass graves from a plague was encountered.

All of the remains were transferred to the Smithsonian Institution. The remaining burials at the site were left unexcavated as they were outside the highway project right-of-way. These burials should remain undisturbed, but should be monitored in case future work impinges on Site 18FR323.

External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):

00005963, 00005972, 00005973, 00005974, JPPM-NEH